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Enterprise in latitude 64°. If a ship could pierce through the ice which clings to the coast of Siberia, we firmly believe it could cross the pole, and, favored by the powerful current which pours down from the polar region north of Spitzbergen, could return in triumph to the Atlantic.

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- ART. IX.—1. *Report from the select Committee on Public Libraries ; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix.* Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed, 23 July, 1849. London. Folio. pp. xx. and 317.
2. *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Constitution and Government of the British Museum ; with Minutes of Evidence.* Presented to both Houses of Parliament, by Command of Her Majesty. London : Printed by William Clowes and Sons. 1850. Folio. pp. xlv. and 823.
3. *Annual Report of the Trustees of the Astor Library of the City of New York.* Made to the Legislature, January 29, 1850. Albany : Weed, Parsons, and Co., Public Printers. 1850. [Assembly Document, No. 43, pp. 30.]
4. *Reports, etc., of the Smithsonian Institution, exhibiting its Plans, Operations, and Financial Condition up to January 1, 1849.* From the third annual Report of the Board of Regents. Presented to Congress, February 19th, 1849. Washington : Thomas Ritchie, Printer. 1849. 8vo. pp. 72.

ALLUDING to our attainments in literature and science in comparison with those of other nations of our age, Mr. Justice Story, in an address before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, a few years since, made the following remarks : — “ We have no reason to blush for what we have been or what we are. But we shall have much to blush for, if, when the highest attainments of the human intellect are within our reach, we surrender ourselves to an obstinate indifference or

shallow mediocrity ; if, in our literary career, we are content to rank behind the meanest principality of Europe. Let us not waste our time in seeking for apologies for our ignorance where it exists, or in framing excuses to conceal it. Let our short reply to all such suggestions be, like the answer of a noble youth on another occasion, that we know the fact, and are every day getting the better of it."

The orator then ventures to mention one of our greatest national deficiencies, and says,—"There is not, *perhaps*, a single library in America, sufficiently copious to have enabled Gibbon to have verified the authorities for his immortal History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."\*

Notwithstanding his prefatory remarks, and the qualifying terms in which he stated this fact, it was received with surprise, and some doubt, by a large portion of his audience. Nearly all his hearers thought it a bold statement to be made so near to the vast bibliographical treasures of Harvard College. It was even hinted that the orator had probably been seeking in vain for some ancient black-letter law book from the press of Richard Pynson, and had drawn his general conclusions from his particular disappointment. But had the distinguished jurist been as learned in bibliothecal as in legal lore, had he and his audience been as thoroughly familiar with the actual condition and wants of our public libraries, as they were, in general, impressed with the importance of strenuous efforts on the part of men of literature and science, to raise our relative rank with other nations in these respects, he could have presented a much stronger case without danger of exciting surprise or doubt. It would not have been necessary to have cited so distinguished an author as Gibbon, nor so elaborate and learned a work as his matchless history. Our own neighborhood would furnish many instances, where research has been abandoned in despair on account of the meagreness of materials for pursuing the necessary investigations. We do not hesitate to say, that not one, nor all the libraries in this country combined, would furnish sufficient materials

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\* Fisher Ames had, many years before, made a similar statement ; and we have it from a high source, that John Quincy Adams attempted to supply the deficiency, by importing at his own expense every work to which Gibbon refers in his History. In the collection of books left by Mr. Adams, and now at the family mansion in Quincy, there are probably more of these authorities than in any other library in the country.

for writing a complete history of that little book of three or four score diminutive pages, which has had such a mighty influence in moulding the character and creed of former generations, "The New England Primer." \*

With respect to Gibbon, it might have been said with equal truth, that probably not all the libraries in Great Britain, and perhaps no single library in the world, was sufficiently copious to have supplied him with the authorities for his work. According to his own published statement, he was obliged to collect and purchase for his own use the extensive and valuable works which form the basis of his history. So, in our own country, such writers as Irving, Sparks, Prescott, and Bancroft have been obliged to visit Europe to collect materials for their histories, or at a great expense to import the works which ought to have been freely furnished to them from our public libraries. It was only by visiting Spain, and collecting, at his own cost, one of the best libraries of Spanish literature anywhere to be found, that Mr. Ticknor was enabled to avail himself of the materials necessary for writing his invaluable work. If either of the above-named distinguished authors had been less favored in their means, the world would not have enjoyed the results of their studies. Is it strange, then, that our country has not produced a larger number of eminent and thorough scholars? The pursuits of literature are, at present, too expensive for any but fortune's favorites to engage in them with success.

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\* This assertion must not be regarded by the reader as a random or reckless one, intended more for effect than for expressing an ascertained fact; for such is not the case. Not many months since, a series of articles on the History of the New England Primer appeared in the "Cambridge Chronicle." The writer gave some account of the authors of the various pieces in that little book, and of the persons named therein. In speaking of John Rogers, the story of whose martyrdom (with an affecting picture to match) occupies so prominent a place in the Primer, it was stated that he had exhibited, in the case of Joan Bocher, an equally persecuting spirit with that of his papistical executioners. The origin of this accusation was traced back to Fox, who was a contemporary of Rogers. The account in "The Cambridge Chronicle" was given from "Crosby's History of the Baptists." The writer of that work copies from Peirce, who, in his History of the Dissenters, says that he had it from the first Latin edition of "Fox's Book of Martyrs," and that it was suppressed in the following editions, out of regard to the memory of Rogers. Some of the numerous persons in this country bearing the name of Rogers, and claiming to be lineal descendants of him of Primer memory, were unwilling to receive at second-hand a statement which, if true, leaves a deep stain on the character of their ancestor. Diligent inquiry was made for the original work; but no copy of the first edition of Fox's Book of Martyrs could be found in any library in the country. Several cases of a similar kind occurred when investigating the history of the Primer; and other important matters connected with that little book and its authors were left in doubt, on account of the impossibility of obtaining the requisite works to verify or correct them.

It would be difficult to name a subject of equal importance that has heretofore received so little attention, or a want equally pressing, which has been so inadequately supplied, as that of large and well selected public libraries. We would not be understood as intimating that there has been a designed neglect or unwillingness to furnish the means for the highest intellectual culture, and for the most thorough literary and scientific investigations. On the contrary, we have the fullest faith that it is only necessary to have the deficiencies in these respects made known, in order that they may be soon supplied. Indeed, the paramount importance of large, well furnished libraries, easily accessible to students and others, has never been denied. The reason why we have to lament their present great deficiencies is the mistaken notion as to what may properly be said to constitute a satisfactory collection.

We suppose that the opinion pretty extensively prevails, that as far as this country and Europe are concerned, the present condition of these institutions may be regarded with unalloyed satisfaction. We often hear the libraries of Harvard, Yale, and Brown universities, with those in the cities of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, alluded to in terms which show very evidently, that, in the estimation of the public, there is no cause for complaint on account of their present condition. According to the common belief, these large collections contain nearly every work worth preserving in the various departments of literature and science. If a scholar desires thoroughly to investigate any subject, he has only to resort thither to find all that has ever been published by his predecessors in the same departments, and all that is necessary to aid him in his pursuits. Certainly, these large collections — from 30,000 to 60,000 volumes — must contain all that any scholar can ever need. But if, perchance, a case should arise in which a rare work is needed for reference, and is not to be found in the country, a visit to the British Museum, where there are nearly half a million of volumes, or to the national library at Paris, with twice that number, will supply all deficiencies.

A single fact, selected from a multitude of a similar character which have come to our knowledge, will be sufficient to show the error of such a conclusion. Within a few months, an English writer has published the following statement in the London Athenæum: — “In the progress of a late histori-

cal inquiry, I covered a sheet of paper with notes and questions, that could be solved only by reference to contemporary tracts and pamphlets. On visiting the Museum, it was found that *not five per cent.* of what I wanted were contained in that great national collection." Now, it must be acknowledged, that the Library of the British Museum contains one of the most complete collections of historical works to be found in any country; and it is known to be particularly rich in books and pamphlets relative to the history of Great Britain. Yet the writer whom we have quoted finds cause to regret its great incompleteness in that department. We presume a similar, perhaps a greater, deficiency would be found in nearly every other department. Nor is this the fault of those to whom the duty of purchasing the books is intrusted. Considering the multiplicity and variety of objects that claim their attention, and the inadequate means afforded to them, it is wonderful that so much has been accomplished in supplying the wants of different classes of readers and scholars.

The popular error that only the *best* books and on the most important subjects are worth preserving, has done much to retard the establishment and growth of large libraries in this country. When a person, unaccustomed to the use or sight of many books, enters for the first time a large library, he is very likely to utter an exclamation of astonishment at the vastness — *the unnecessary extent* — of the collection, and to make the wondering inquiry whether anybody is expected to read all the volumes; as if all books that are worth preserving are therefore to be read through! It has been well said, that a National Library should contain all those works which are too costly, too voluminous, or of *too little value* in the common estimation, to be found elsewhere, down even to the smallest tracts. An old almanac or a forgotten pamphlet has sometimes enabled the historian to verify or correct some important point which would otherwise have remained in dispute.

The publication of the various documents whose titles are given above affords the best evidence, that at length the subject is likely to be treated in a manner more nearly commensurate with its importance. We therefore notice their appearance with great pleasure. Our purpose in presenting the subject to our readers at this time is not so much to offer remarks and suggestions of our own, as to lay before them some facts con-

cerning the libraries of Europe and America, derived principally from the two reports which stand first on our list.

Almost immediately on the publication of these reports, a sharp controversy, which is not likely soon to be closed, was commenced in England concerning some of the matters therein discussed. We have no desire to take part in that controversy; nor is it our intention to enter upon a critical review of the reports. Although prepared for the specific purpose indicated by the titles, they contain much valuable information of equal value to us in this country. Of this we gratefully avail ourselves. Probably there has never before been brought together so great a mass of original matter on the subject of libraries. Almost every particular connected with the establishment and proper management of such institutions was considered by the committees, and the results of their investigations are given at length in the reports and in the copious minutes of evidence that accompany them. Many of the statements which are here published, on the highest authority, were received, on their publication in England, with surprise and distrust. The reason of this is obvious. No thorough, systematic investigation, at all adequate to the importance of the subject, had ever before been made. The people of Great Britain were not prepared to be told that, in the matter of public libraries, they ranked lower than any other country in Europe. But we think it would create still greater surprise, in this country, if a correct comparative view of our condition were published by the side of that of the European states. It would be found that we present to the world the singular anomaly of a nation, second to none in respect to the general intelligence of the whole people and the means of a common education — a nation unequalled as readers and book-buyers, and yet, in the matter of libraries to which an author may resort thoroughly to investigate any subject on which he may be about to write, ranking far below most of the countries of Europe. We have no cause to lament, but on the contrary, occasion greatly to rejoice, at our comparative condition, on the whole, when placed beside that of the most favored of the countries to which we have alluded. The advantages for the almost universal diffusion of useful knowledge among us, we should, by no means, be willing to exchange for the means of affording to a privileged few the

opportunities of the highest culture, and the most thorough historical or literary research. But we are subjected to no such alternative. Our people are and will be readers. They are generally prepared to make a good use of books of a higher order than those offered to them in so cheap and attractive a form by our enterprising publishers. Now, either their energies will be wasted in a desultory, unprofitable course of reading, by which they will gain only a superficial knowledge of almost every conceivable subject, or they must be furnished with the means, which they are so well prepared to use to advantage, of going to the bottom of whatever subject interests them, and, having exhausted the wisdom of past generations, of adding to the stock of general knowledge from the results of their own thoughts and experience.

The select committee appointed in March, 1849, by the British House of Commons to report on the best means of "extending the establishment of Libraries freely open to the public, especially in large towns, in Great Britain and Ireland," consisted of fifteen members, namely: — Mr. Ewart, Viscount Ebrington, Mr. D'Israeli, Sir Harry Verney, Mr. Charteris, Mr. Bunbury, Mr. George Alexander Hamilton, Mr. Brotherton, Mr. Milnes, The Lord Advocate, Sir John Walsh, Mr. Thicknesse, Mr. Mackinnon, Mr. Kershaw, and Mr. Wyld. The committee appear to have entered upon their labors with zeal, and to have performed their duty with thoroughness and fidelity. They held numerous sessions, and examined a large number of witnesses. The particulars of these examinations are printed in full. The report of the committee occupies only twelve pages, whilst the minutes of evidence, tables, &c., fill over three hundred. The committee appear to have felt, that it was only necessary to lay before Parliament and the public the facts concerning the present condition and wants of the public libraries, in order to ensure the supply of all deficiencies.

After presenting a brief view of the libraries in the various countries of Europe, with a more particular account of the present condition of those in Great Britain, showing that the English are far behind their continental neighbors in this respect, the Committee say: —

"Whatever may be our disappointment at the rarity of Public Libraries in the United Kingdom, we feel satisfaction in stating,



that the uniform current of the evidence tends to prove the increased qualifications of the people to appreciate and enjoy such institutions. Testimony showing a great improvement in national habits and manners is abundantly given in the evidence taken by the Committee. That they would be further improved by the establishment of Public Libraries, it needs not even the high authority and ample evidence of the witnesses who appeared before the Committee to demonstrate." — p. vii.

Frequent and favorable allusions are made in the report and the minutes of evidence to the numerous popular libraries in this country for district schools, factories, &c. These, we are aware, are of the greatest value. But these alone are not sufficient. The establishment of even a hundred thousand small, village, or district-school, libraries, would not supersede the necessity of a certain number of large and comprehensive ones. These little collections are much alike, each containing nearly the same books as every other. The Committee of Parliament appear to understand this.

"It is evident that there should be, in all countries, libraries of two sorts : libraries of deposit and research ; and libraries devoted to the general reading and circulation of books. Libraries of deposit should contain, if possible, almost every book that ever has existed. This point is justly dwelt upon by many witnesses, and especially by that learned person and experienced bibliophile, M. Libri. 'The most insignificant tract,' the most trifling essay, a sermon, a newspaper, or a song, may afford an illustration of manners or opinions elucidatory of the past, and throw a faithful, though feeble light, on the pathway of the future historian. In such libraries nothing should be rejected. Not but that libraries of deposit and of general reading may (as in the case of the British Museum) be combined. But though such combination is possible, and may be desirable, the distinction which we have drawn should never be forgotten." — p. ix.

The value of printed catalogues was fully considered by the committee, and they have expressed a decided opinion respecting their importance. As we shall have occasion to recur to this subject when we come to consider the report of the commissioners on the Museum, we defer our remarks till that time, and pass at once to a notice of some of the principal witnesses on whose testimony the conclusions of the committee are founded.

The first, and apparently, in the estimation of the commit-

tee, the most important witness, was Edward Edwards, Esq., an assistant in the department of printed books in the British Museum. The minutes of his evidence alone cover between sixty and seventy of the closely printed folio pages accompanying the report. Besides this, he has furnished various statistical tables, occupying fifty pages, and a series of twelve maps. In one of the maps it is his purpose to exhibit, by various shades, the relative provision of books in public libraries in the principal states of Europe, as compared with their respective populations; and in the others, the local situation of the public libraries in some of the principal cities. The evidence of Mr. Edwards has been severely commented upon in the London newspapers and elsewhere, and some inaccuracies in his tables, of greater or less magnitude, have been pointed out. We might, perhaps, by a particular examination of every word and figure, add something to the list of errata. But we think that those persons who are most familiar with the difficulty of obtaining exact statistical information will not wonder that an error should here and there be found. We have looked over the evidence and the tables with considerable care, and think them, on the whole, highly creditable to the author. It is evident, however, from the general tenor of his testimony, that Mr. Edwards presses rather too strongly the point respecting the condition of England compared with that of the countries on the continent, as to the number and accessibility of their public libraries. His enthusiasm on the subject, arising probably from a laudable desire to have his own country take a higher rank in respect to libraries than she now holds, has led him, we think, to overlook or undervalue some of the advantages which she already possesses. But his facts and figures are, in the main, to be relied upon; and we shall make use of them as sufficiently accurate to give our readers a general view of the present bibliothecal condition of the principal countries of Europe. In justice to Mr. Edwards, we copy what he says of the difficulty of obtaining such statistical information, and of the value to be attached to it.

*Ques.* "Have you turned your attention to a comparison of the number and extent of the libraries accessible to the public in the principal states of Europe?"

*Ans.* "I have turned my attention to that subject, and have

formed several lists of such libraries, as far as I have been able to acquire information respecting them."

*Ques.* "In what respects do you think a statistical comparison of this kind is of value?"

*Ans.* "Of course, in order to an accurate comparison of the value of different libraries, you ought to know something of the character of the books contained in them respectively; but I think that even a mere comparison of the numbers has some relative value, especially if taken in connection with their growth, so that you can compare what a library was, in point of extent, at one period, with what it has become at a later period."

*Ques.* "Have you found it easy to acquire accurate data for such a comparison?"

*Ans.* "It is a matter of very considerable difficulty indeed; there are few subjects upon which looser and vaguer statements are to be found, even in statistical works of great repute, than upon that matter. In fact, the difficulty is still greater with respect to English libraries than with respect to foreign; very little attention has been bestowed upon the statistics of libraries, either home or foreign, in this country. I think there are but two ways in which any thing like accurate information can be obtained; namely, either by practical familiarity with the libraries themselves, which it has not been in my power to attain to any great degree, or by correspondence, which latter I have carried on to a considerable extent. It is upon that I base most of the results at which I have arrived."

*Ques.* "What is the result of your comparison between the libraries of the continent and those which exist in this country?"

*Ans.* "That nearly every European state is in a far higher position, both as to the number and extent of libraries accessible to the public, and, generally, as respects the accessibility of such libraries as do exist. There are some exceptions, but speaking generally, in both these respects, almost every European state is in a far higher position than this country."

On Mr. Edwards's map of Europe, we find the smaller German states to be represented with the lightest lines, indicating the highest rank, and Great Britain with the darkest or lowest. He states the provision of books in libraries publicly accessible, as compared with the population, to be as follows:—In Saxony, for every 100 inhabitants, there are 417 books; in Denmark, 412; in Bavaria, 339; in Tuscany, 261; in Prussia, 200; in Austria, 167; in France, 129; in Belgium, 95; whilst in Great Britain, there are only 53 to every 100 inhabitants.

In the following tables, the libraries containing less than 10,000 volumes each (of which there are, in France alone, at least seventy or eighty,) are not taken into the account.

France has 107 Public	Saxony has 6 cont'g	554,000 vols.
Libraries containing 4,000,000 vols.	Bavaria " 17 do.	1,267,000 "
Belgium has 14 do. 538,000 "	Denmark " 5 do.	645,000 "
Prussia " 44 do. 2,400,000 "	Tuscany " 9 do.	411,000 "
Austria " 48 do. 2,400,000 "	G. Britain " 33 do.	1,771,493 "

Taking the capital cities we find the following results: —

Paris has 9 Public	Dresden has 4 cont'g	340,500 "
Libraries containing 1,474,000 vols.	Munich " 2 do.	800,000 "
Brussels has 2 do. 143,500 "	Copenhagen " 3 do.	557,000 "
Berlin " 2 do. 530,000 "	Florence " 6 do.	318,000 "
Vienna " 3 do. 453,000 "	London " 4 do.	490,500 "
Milan " 2 do. 230,000 "		

Arranging these libraries according to their extent, they would stand as follows: —

	Vols.		Vols.
Paris (1) National Library,	824,000	Milan, Brera Library,	170,000
Munich, Royal Library,	600,000	Paris (3), St. Genevieve,	150,000
Petersburg Imperial Library,	446,000	Darmstadt, Grand Ducal,	150,000
London, British Museum,	435,000	Florence, Magliabecchian,	150,000
Copenhagen, Royal Library,	412,000	Naples, Royal Library,	150,000
Berlin, Royal Library,	410,000	Brussels, Royal Library,	133,500
Vienna, Imperial Library,	313,000	Rome (1), Casanate Library,	120,000
Dresden, Royal Library,	300,000	Hague, Royal Library,	100,000
Madrid, National Library,	200,000	Paris (4), Mazarine Library,	100,000
Wolfenbittel, Ducal Library,	200,000	Rome (2), Vatican Library,	100,000
Stuttgart, Royal Library,	187,000	Parma, Ducal Library,	100,000
Paris (2), Arsenal Library,	180,000		

The chief University Libraries may be ranked in the following order: —

	Vols.		Vols.
Gottingen, University Lib.,	360,000	Vienna, University Library,	115,000
Breslau, University Library,	250,000	Leipsic, University Library,	112,000
Oxford, Bodleian Library,	220,000	Copenhagen, University Lib.,	110,000
Tubingen, University Lib.,	200,000	Turin, University Library,	110,000
Munich, University Library,	200,000	Louvaine University Library,	105,000
Heidelberg, University Lib.,	200,000	Dublin, Trinity College Lib.,	104,239
Cambridge, Public Library,	166,724	Upsal, University Library,	100,000
Bologna, University Library,	150,000	Erlangen, University Library,	100,000
Prague, University Library,	130,000	Edinburgh, University Lib.,	90,354

The largest Libraries in Great Britain are those of the

	Vols.		Vols.
1 British Museum, London,	435,000	4 Advocates, Edinburgh,	148,000
2 Bodleian, Oxford,	220,000	5 Trinity College, Dublin,	104,239
3 University, Cambridge,	166,724		

Several pages are devoted by Mr. Edwards to a statistical

view of the public libraries in the United States. But as the estimated number of volumes in each does not appear in all cases to apply to the same year, and as many of these collections have recently been considerably enlarged, and their relative size changed, we cannot make use of the tables which he furnishes, to show the actual extent of our libraries at the present time. But as it may be a matter of interest to our readers to know how we stand reported to the British Parliament, we present below Mr. Edwards's "Summary." In this account, he includes only those libraries which contain 5000 volumes and upwards, to which the public, more or less restrictedly, have access. It embraces State libraries and those of Colleges and Mercantile Societies; but does not include the numerous small school and parish libraries.

	Vols.		Vols.
1 Alabama, has 1 Pub. Lib.	6,000	Brought up,	34, 454,366
2 Columbia, Dist. of, has 2,	53,000	12 New Jersey,	has 3, 28,500
3 Connecticut, " 6,	81,449	13 New York,	" 12, 157,411
4 Georgia, " 1,	13,000	14 North Carolina,	" 1, 10,000
5 Kentucky, " 1,	7,000	15 Ohio,	" 4, 30,497
6 Louisiana, " 1,	5,500	16 Pennsylvania,	" 14, 159,200
7 Maine, " 3,	38,860	17 Rhode Island,	" 3, 37,185
8 Maryland, " 1,	12,000	18 South Carolina,	" 2, 30,000
9 Massachusetts, " 14,	200,757	19 Tennessee,	" 2, 16,000
10 Missouri, " 2,	14,300	20 Vermont,	" 2, 16,254
11 New Hampshire, " 2,	22,500	21 Virginia,	" 4, 41,000
	34, 454,366	Total . . .	81 980,413

In accordance with the spirit of Mr. Justice Story's advice, which we quoted at the commencement of our article, it may not be amiss for us to compare this aggregate number of volumes, which is given as the sum total of books in our public libraries, with that of some other country, state, or city. We select the capital city of France.

Estimated number in the Public Libraries of Paris is	1,474,000
" " " " in the U. S.	980,514
Excess in favor of Paris,	493,486

This remarkable fact, that, in the matter of large libraries, the single city of Paris is much better supplied than the whole United States, may well create surprise, but should not cause discouragement. If we are compelled to confess, in the words of the orator alluded to above, "that we know the fact," we can with equal truth add what he then hoped might be so, "we are every day getting the better of it." We shall

have something more to say presently about the real condition of the libraries in this country.

Mr. Edwards's "summary" is probably as nearly correct as it could be made from any statistics which had then been published in this country. It is a fact not very creditable to us, that the most accurate account of American libraries that has ever appeared was published several years ago in Germany, and has never been translated into English. We are much pleased to learn, however, that the officers of the Smithsonian Institution have taken measures for ascertaining fully and exactly the number and size of the public libraries in the United States; so that we shall be likely soon to have accurate statistical accounts of the highest value, prepared by the accomplished librarian of that national institution, and published under the sanction of its government. In the report for 1849, Professor Jewett states the number of public libraries in the United States, as far as then ascertained, to be 182; and the whole number of volumes 1,294,000. This would still leave this country behind the single city of Paris. When the complete returns above alluded to are received and published, the United States will present a much better appearance than heretofore, though even then obliged to acknowledge great deficiencies, and to take a lower rank with respect to libraries than almost any country in Europe. We have already stated, that the relative rank of the libraries in this country has been changed within a few years. We give below the present number of volumes in a few of the largest.

1 Harvard College, including the Law and Divinity Schools,	Vols. 72,000	6 Mercantile Lib., New York,	Vols. 32,000
2 Philadelphia & Loganian Lib.	60,000	7 Georgetown College, D. C.,	25,000
3 Boston Athenæum,	50,000	8 Brown University,	24,000
4 Library of Congress,	50,000	9 New York State Library,	24,000
5 New York Society Library,	32,000	10 Yale College,	21,000

We are sorry to find that the library of Harvard College, which is the oldest, and, for a long time, was much the largest and best, in the country, is fast losing its relative rank. Had the powerful appeal of President Quincy to the Legislature in 1833 produced its proper effect, and had the State of Massachusetts granted from her treasury the sum necessary to erect a suitable library building, the College would have been enabled to expend annually for the increase of the library the interest of the cost of that building, and we should not be

obliged to deplore the many deficiencies of the library. It was well said by Mr. Quincy at that time, — “The interest of the public in the preservation of this library is far greater than the interest of the seminary; so much greater, that, in one point of view, it may truly be said, that the commonwealth is exclusively interested in its preservation; for so far as the interests of the seminary are regarded as identical with its wants as an institution for the instruction of youth, they are within the power of any insurance. But the interests of the public are absolutely beyond the power of any insurance, and if lost are irreparable.”\* Unfortunately it sometimes happens, that State Legislatures are so constituted that the logic and eloquence of such a man as the distinguished President are less effective than the fulsome and extravagant addresses of Monsieur Vattemare.

But the aid which ought to have been promptly granted by the State to the College that she delights to claim as her own child, and over which she exercises jurisdiction, was derived from the munificent bequest of a private individual. Gore Hall is the monument of the liberality of a single benefactor. We wish we could say that the contents of the library were in better keeping with the costly edifice in which they are deposited. We are not unmindful of the great real and comparative value of the books that are now to be found in the collection. By the munificence of Israel Thorndike and Samuel A. Eliot, two entire and very valuable collections of books on American History were bought and presented to the College. These, together with books purchased with the bequest of \$3,000 by the late Judge Prescott, make the library more nearly complete in this than in any other department. On the completion of Gore Hall, a liberal amount was subscribed, by which other departments of the library were greatly enriched. Yet its meagreness in almost every department, if made known, would be likely to create astonishment. We venture to point to a single instance as an illustration of what we have just said; and we do this not to decry the college library, which is, on the whole, the best in the country, but to show that the common idea, that the library is already full, is far from correct. The department of bibli-

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\* Considerations relating to the Library of Harvard University, &c. — p. 4.

ography is of the highest importance to every well conducted library. Bibliographical books are to the librarian and the literary man what the compass is to the mariner, or the tools of his trade to the artisan. A complete bibliographical library would not of itself contain less than 20,000 volumes. We have recently seen two accounts of the number of volumes that would be immediately important at the commencement of a large library. The first was prepared for the Smithsonian Institution, and consists of 3000 volumes; and the other is "A concise classified list of the most important works on Bibliography, being those selected in this department for the Astor Library," and embracing about 2000 volumes. A few weeks since, we had the curiosity to ascertain from actual count, how many of the works named in this "concise list" were in the college library, and found that not one third of those named therein were now, or ever had been, there. Other departments are equally deficient. We should be sorry to see the managers of our public libraries under the influence of bibliomania. We do not, however, consider that their tendency lies in that direction. There is not, to our knowledge, in any public library in New England, even a specimen of the printing of Guttenberg, the inventor of the art, nor of Caxton who first printed in England. The only specimen of printing from the early New England press, which is contained in the college library, is an imperfect copy of the Bay Psalm Book. Let us look for one moment at the other end of the list of works which one would naturally expect to find in a library like this. Considering the close connection which such men as Buckminster, Channing, and Henry Ware, held with the institution, we should expect to find at least one copy of the published life and works of each of these eminent divines. But they are not there. We will not multiply instances of deficiencies. The Harvard College Library is, notwithstanding what we have said, better provided with useful books than any other library in the country. It has been confidently asserted, and we believe with strict truth, that not one of the original thirteen States in the Union possesses a complete and perfect set of its own printed documents.

The second witness examined by the committee was M. Guizot. In the distinguished positions which he has filled as Minister of Public Instruction, and Prime Minister in France,



his attention has been turned to the public libraries of that country. Whilst in office, he ordered an inspection of those institutions; and the French Government now has complete and exact documents relative to the number of public libraries and the number of books in each library. These libraries are accessible to the public, in every way, for reading, and, to a great extent, for borrowing books. Some of them receive direct grants from the government towards their support. Others, in the provincial towns, are supported by municipal funds; to these, the government distributes copies of costly works, for the publication of which it subscribes liberally.

The subject of international exchanges of books, as proposed and urged with so much zeal by M. Vattemare, was considered by the committee of Parliament. M. Guizot, from his intimate knowledge of the origin and success of this much vaunted system, was eminently qualified to perceive the great advantages, if any, which have arisen, or would be likely to arise, from its general adoption by various countries. His calm and cool replies contrast strongly with the tone of extravagance with which the matter has generally been treated, especially in this country.

*Ques.* Can you favor the committee with any suggestions as to the means of facilitating interchanges of books between the public libraries of different countries?

*Ans.* I had some conversations on that matter with M. Alexandre Vattemare, who travelled in the United States. He was the great undertaker of the interchanges between the different libraries; nothing very practical or of great extent occurred; I tried several different ways, but I never came to any important and general results.

*Ques.* Not even with the United States?

*Ans.* No.

When we call to mind the fact that this witness was greatly interested in the growth and prosperity of libraries, that he had given much attention to their condition and wants, that the system of which he speaks originated almost immediately under his own eye, and that the views and projects of the originator were well known to him, we must attach the highest value to his testimony.

There is much that, at first, is quite attractive and plausible in the system, as presented by its founder and zealous

agent. The good feeling which it promises to promote between nations and individuals, is a pleasant feature in the plan, and has won for it many advocates. The earnest and continued importunity, with which the matter has been pressed upon the attention of Congress and of the State Legislatures has secured sufficient attention to obtain approbatory resolves and liberal grants of money and books to forward the object.

The estimated amount which M. Vattemare names, as necessary for the support of his agency, is \$10,250 per year. He has already secured toward this object the following grants; namely, from the U. S. Congress, \$2,000; and from the State of Maine, \$300; New Hampshire, \$200; Vermont, \$200; Massachusetts, \$300; Rhode Island, \$200; Connecticut, \$200; New York, \$400; New Jersey, \$300; Delaware, \$100; Virginia, \$400; North Carolina, \$200; South Carolina, \$300; Indiana, \$400; which gives him already the annual sum of \$5,500. M. Vattemare very naturally feels encouraged by this success, and indulges the confident expectation, that "every State in the Union will cheerfully contribute toward the support of the central agency at Paris." A still more gratifying circumstance connected with his labors is thus mentioned: "It is, that from the hour I, for the second time, set my foot upon your shores, to this hour, though I have in that time traversed so large a portion of your country, and visited so many of your cities and great towns, I have not yet been permitted to expend the first dollar, either for my personal support or my travelling expenses."\* He, with much reason, speaks in high terms of the hospitality and generosity with which he has been received in this country. We believe a similar cordiality of reception has not awaited him elsewhere. We do not learn that any other government, not even that of his own native country, has made any grant toward the support of his agency.

Appeals were made to our national pride and patriotism, as well as to our purse. A single specimen will give a fair idea of the usual style of his appeals. Mons. Vattemare, in his letter to his Excellency, Governor Briggs, says,† "It is a lamentable fact that the United States does (?) not now

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\* Address delivered before the Legislature of New Hampshire, June 28th, 1849, page 33.

† Massachusetts Senate Document, No. 26, February, 1845, page 4.

occupy that rank in European estimation to which *her* (?) social and national position entitle her." After intimating that the adoption of his system of exchanges is all that is necessary to raise us in European estimation, he breaks out in the following strain of overpowering eloquence : — "The veil of ignorance which shuts out your country from view will fall ; and she will stand in the eyes of Europe in her true dignity and glory, illuminated by the blaze of intellectual light ever radiated from the constellation of stars that deck her standard ! She will be known. She needs but to be known to be appreciated, admired, and respected." But our reputation as a sharp, calculating people is not forgotten ; and he ends by setting forth the good bargains we may make by exchanges with our European friends : —

"But your State will reap a rich reward for thus elevating the national character. The treasures which have for centuries been accumulating in the vast storehouses of European knowledge, the works of her artists, inspired by the masterpieces of the world, the laws, founded on the experience of ages, which direct her vast governments, and protect her immense population, — will be sent you with a profuse hand, in exchange for what will cost you a mere trifle. Value, intrinsic value, will not for a moment be taken into consideration. *The Bulletin des Lois*, 240 volumes, has already been sent for a copy of the Revised Statutes of one of your sister States ; and you may expect a similar prolific return ; — a rattlesnake or a lizard may procure a copy of the *Venus de Medicis*, a State map the Geological map of France, published at a cost of five hundred francs per copy, and not to be purchased. In short, while the first-mentioned object will be gloriously effected, you will be real gainers by the exchange, and fill your State Library, or the collection of your University, with what it would cost immense sums to purchase."

Such appeals were irresistible. Appropriations of money and books were soon made, and have been continued annually. We will not say that the works received in exchange are not all that could be reasonably expected or desired ; nor that the amount appropriated, if wisely expended by a committee of our own legislature, would have procured more books, and those better adapted to the wants of the persons who make use of the State Library. We cannot say, whether or not our rank as a nation or state has been raised as was predicted. Nor have we heard whether the rattlesnake was ever sent,

and the Venus de Medicis received in exchange. But one thing we must confess; namely, that our faith in the feasibility of the system, never very firm, has not been strengthened by carefully considering the subject in its various bearings.

It is not our object to throw doubt on the sincerity and disinterestedness of the zealous originator and promoter of the system. The recent manifestations of distrust in certain quarters concerning his fidelity have not been justified by any specific proof. Monsieur Vattermare appears to be filled with the idea, that his system of exchanges will be of immense benefit to the nations which embrace it, and by his personal exertions he has already accomplished much. No one can look over the printed list of donations to the New York State Library, procured through his agency, without feeling that *that* State, at least, has good cause to speak well of his scheme and its results. But our conviction is strong, that the system does not possess the elements of permanent or long continued vitality. The novelty of the thing, and the lofty promises which it makes as a promoter of good feeling between nations, and of their mutual benefit in other respects, when presented by the ardent advocate of the system, are likely to make for it friends, and may produce *immediate* good results. But this zealous interest is not easily to be transferred to another agent, when M. Vattermare's labors from any cause shall cease.

When we notice the readiness of our national and state legislatures to listen to the representations of this foreign irresponsible agent, and to grant him privileges and appropriations with unwonted liberality, our fears are great, that the attention of those whose duty it is to see that the deficiencies of our public libraries are carefully attended to, will be diverted from practicable and permanent methods of supplying their real wants by this attractive though somewhat visionary project.

His Excellency M. Van de Weyer, Minister from Belgium, was next examined. He testified that the public libraries in his country were numerous, large, and easily accessible to all who desire to make use of them. He attributes the best results to the literary character of his country from this privilege of free access to their large collections of books. He thinks the people are better prepared than is generally supposed to appreciate works of a high character. He seems to think it

unwise to attempt to popularize science and literature by printing inferior books, written expressly for common and uneducated people. The government subscribe for a number of copies of nearly every valuable work that is published, by which means they encourage the progress of literature, and are enabled to enrich many of the libraries.

“The government have sometimes, within a space of twenty years, spent some £10,000 or £12,000 in favor of libraries. I take this opportunity of stating also, that though the Chamber only votes a grant of 65,000 or 70,000 francs for the Royal Public Library of Brussels, whenever there is some large sale going on, there is always a special grant made to the library. Lately one of the most curious private libraries had been advertised for sale; a catalogue had been printed in six volumes; the government immediately came forward, bought the whole of the library for £13,000 or £14,000, and made it an addition to the Royal Library in Brussels; they did the same thing at Ghent; I believe the library that they bought at Ghent consisted of about 20,000 volumes, and in Brussels about 60,000 or 70,000 volumes.” — p. 52.

Passing by several witnesses, whose evidence we should be glad to notice did our limits allow us to do so, we come to George Dawson, Esq., who, as a lecturer, has had opportunities of becoming acquainted with the condition, the feelings, and the wants of the working classes in the manufacturing towns, both in England and Scotland. He testifies, that libraries to some extent have already been formed in those places, and that there is a very general desire among the working people to avail themselves of more and better books. They can appreciate the best authors. Political and historical subjects interest them most, but the higher class of poetry is also read by them. Milton is much read. Mr. Dawson says, “Shakspeare is known by heart almost; I could produce men who could be cross examined upon any play.”

The contrast between the manufacturing and the farming districts, in respect to the intelligence of the people and their desire for improvement, is very great. Speaking of one of the agricultural districts, Mr. Dawson says, “I have heard of a parish in Norfolk, where a woman was the parish clerk, because there was not a man in the parish who could read or write.”

The Rev. William Robert Freemantle, the next witness, has turned his attention to the institution of libraries for the

instruction of the rural population. He says that people are very little acquainted with the extraordinary ignorance of the poor in rural districts. Many books selected for them lie on their tables unread. "Shakspeare would be lost upon them." Alluding to the opposition manifested by the farmers to the spread of education and knowledge among the laborers in these districts, he says, —

"I should be sorry to say any thing unfavorable to farmers; I have a great respect for them, but I am afraid if they do not read themselves, they do not like to see the laboring class becoming really and truly wiser than themselves; if the farmers do not move forward, the laboring classes will be the wiser of the two. I have many young men in my parish better instructed than the farmers, and who could give a better answer to a question than many of the farmers themselves." — p. 91.

Henry Stevens, Esq., formerly librarian of one of the libraries connected with Yale College, and familiar with the condition of the principal libraries in this country, was called upon to give an account of the present state of these institutions in the United States. There are but few of our countrymen who would have been able to give so full and correct answers to the questions proposed by the committee as Mr. Stevens. The subject is one to which he has devoted much time and attention, and it was fortunate for the committee that he was in London at the time when they were pursuing their investigations. As Mr. Stevens's evidence has been extensively republished in various ways in this country, and is familiar to many of our readers, it is not necessary to copy any portion of it here. We cannot, however, forbear to avail ourselves of this occasion to allude to the important work on which Mr. Stevens is now engaged, and to accomplish which, in the most thorough manner, he has taken up a temporary residence in London, that he may make use of the rich bibliographical treasures in the British Museum. "The *Bibliographia Americana*" will contain a bibliographical account of the sources of American History, comprising a description of books relating to America prior to the year 1700, and of all books printed in America from 1543 to 1700, together with notices of many of the more important unpublished manuscripts. When the work is ready for the press, it will be published by the Smithsonian Institution in two quarto vol-

umes. Its importance to the future historian will be inestimable.

The committee very justly place much value on the opinions and suggestions of M. Libri. The thorough knowledge which this eminent bibliographer possesses of all matters pertaining to the condition and wants of public libraries, as well as of the needs of literary men, renders his remarks worthy of careful consideration.

“As I have already stated in my evidence, in my opinion, and as all educated men agree, it is necessary that in a great country there should be at least one library, in which one may expect to find, as far as it is possible, all books which learned men, men who occupy themselves upon any subject whatever, and who cultivate one of the branches of human knowledge, may require to consult. Of these, there is nothing useless, nothing ought to be neglected; the most insignificant in appearance, those which on their publication have attracted the least attention, sometimes become the source of valuable and unexpected information. It is in the fragments, now so rare and precious, of some alphabets, of some small grammars published for the use of schools about the middle of the 15th century, or in the letters distributed in Germany by the religious bodies commissioned to collect alms, that bibliographers now seek to discover the first processes employed by the inventors of xylography and typography. It is in a forgotten collection of indifferent plates, published at Venice by Fausto Verantio, towards the end of the 16th century, that an engineer who interests himself in the history of the mechanical arts, might find the first diagram of iron suspension bridges.”

“Nothing should be neglected; nothing is useless to whoever wishes thoroughly to study a subject. An astronomer, who desires to study the motions peculiar to certain stars, requires to consult all the old books of astronomy, and even of astrology, which appear the most replete with error. A chemist, a man who is engaged in the industrial arts, may still consult with profit certain works on alchemy, and even on magic. A legislator, a juriconsult, needs sometimes to be acquainted with the laws, the ordinances, which derive their origin from the most barbarous ages. But it is particularly for the biographer, for the historian, that it is necessary to prepare the largest field of inquiry, to amass the greatest quantity of materials. This is not only true as regards past times, but we ought to prepare the materials for future students. Historical facts which appear the least important, the most insignificant anecdotes, registered in a pamphlet, mentioned in a placard or in a song, may be connected at a later period, in

an unforeseen manner, with events which acquire great importance, or with men who are distinguished in history by their genius, by their sudden elevation, or even by their crimes. We are not born celebrated. Men become so; and when we desire to trace the history of those who have attained it, the inquirer is often obliged to pursue his researches in their most humble beginnings. Who would have imagined that the obscure author of a small pamphlet, "*Le Souper de Beaucaire*," would subsequently become the Emperor Napoleon, and that to write fully the life of the execrable Marat, one ought to have the very insignificant essays on physics that he published before the Revolution? Nothing is too unimportant for whoever wishes thoroughly to study the literary or scientific history of a country, or for one who undertakes to trace the intellectual progress of eminent minds, or to inform himself in detail of the changes which have taken place in the institutions and in the manners of a nation. Without speaking of the commentaries or considerable additions which have been introduced in the various reprints of an author, the successive editions of the same work which appear to resemble each other the most are often distinguished from each other by peculiarities worthy of much attention." — p. 119.

With a brief extract from the evidence of one other witness, we must close our notice of the Report on Public Libraries. Charles Meyer, Esq., German Secretary to His Royal Highness Prince Albert, had given attention to the public libraries of Germany, having resided several years in Gotha, in Hamburgh, in Leipsic, and in Munich. He had perused the principal part of the evidence which had been given by Mr. Edwards upon this subject, and found all that he stated to be quite correct. Dr. Meyer thinks the existence of the numerous and valuable libraries of Germany has given the literary men of that country an advantage over the literary men of England.

"It has saved a great number of our German learned men from the danger of becoming *autodidactoi*, self-taught. I think that is one essential point of difference that is visible in comparing the general character of the instruction in this country with that on the continent; there are in this country a great number of self-taught people, who think according to their own views, without any reference to previous scientific works. They make, sometimes, very great discoveries, but sometimes they find that they have wasted their labor upon subjects already known, which have been written upon by a great number of people before them; but



as they have no access to libraries, it is impossible for them to get acquainted with the literature of that branch upon which they treat."—p. 139.

We come now to the Report of the Commissioners appointed to investigate the affairs of the British Museum. There is probably no other public institution in Great Britain which is regarded with so great and general interest as this. By the variety of its departments, this great national depository of literature and objects of natural history and antiquity meets, in some way, the particular taste of almost every class of citizens. The department of Natural History, in its three divisions of Zoölogy, Botany, and Mineralogy, contains a collection of objects unsurpassed, probably unequalled, in the world. The department of antiquities is, in some particulars, unrivalled for the number and value of the articles it contains. But the library is the crowning glory of the whole. If, in respect to the number of volumes it contains, it does not equal the National Library at Paris, the Royal Library at Munich, or the Imperial Library at Petersburg,—in almost every other respect, such as the value and usefulness of the books, the arrangements for their convenient and safe keeping, the facilities afforded by the officers to persons wishing to consult the books, and, in fact, in every matter pertaining to its internal arrangements,—the library of the British Museum, by the concurrent testimony of competent witnesses from various countries, must take rank above all similar institutions in the world. Well may the people of that nation regard the Museum with pride and pleasure. The liberal grants of Parliament and the munificent bequests of individuals are sure indications of a strong desire and purpose to continue and extend its advantages.

Some idea of the magnitude of the Museum, and of its vast *résources*, may be formed by considering that the buildings alone, in which this great collection is deposited, have cost, since the year 1823, nearly £700,000; and the whole expenditure for purchases, exclusive of the cost of the buildings named above, is considerably more than £1,100,000. Besides this liberal outlay by the British government, there have been numerous magnificent bequests from individuals. The acquisitions from private munificence were estimated, for the twelve years preceding the year 1835, at not less than £400,000.

The latest considerable bequest was that of the Rt. Hon. Thomas Grenville; his library, which he gave to the Museum entire, was valued at over £50,000. The annual receipts of the institution, of late years, from parliamentary grants and the interest of private bequests, have been about £50,000. The number of visitors to the Museum is immense. In the year 1848, they amounted to 897,985, being an average of about three thousand visitors per day for every day when the Museum open. On special occasions, there have been as many as thirty thousand visitors on a single day.

But great as are the advantages which the Museum has freely offered to all who have had occasion to resort to it, and faithfully as its managers have striven to meet every want of the various classes who are interested in any of the different departments, the Museum and its managers have not escaped severe censure. Those of our readers who are in the habit of looking over the English newspapers and magazines must have been for some time aware of this fact. The complaints have principally been of a vague and general character; though occasionally they have assumed a definite form. These increasing, though, as it has proved, generally unfounded, complaints at length demanded and received the attention of Parliament.

In June, 1847, commissioners were appointed to inquire into, and report upon, the constitution and government of the British Museum. In May, 1848, their number was increased. They were invested with full powers to send for persons and papers, and to administer oaths to the witnesses. The Earl of Ellesmere was chairman; and among his associates we find the names of Lord Seymour, the Bishop of Norwich, Joseph Hume, Richard Monckton Milnes, and Samuel Rogers. The character of the commissioners was such as to inspire very general confidence in the fidelity with which they would exercise their functions, and the wisdom with which they would come to their conclusions. Their report, with the minutes of evidence, makes a gigantic document of nearly nine hundred closely printed folio pages. We must express our disappointment and sorrow, that so much of the report and evidence relate to difficulties and misunderstandings between the trustees and the officers of the Museum. We regret still more, that the commissioners found it necessary, in the discharge of

the duty assigned them, to publish so much concerning the internal dissensions, the jealousies and ill feeling, which prevail among the heads of the departments and officers themselves. From their vocation and relative position, we should expect no other than the expression of the kindest sentiments, and the cultivation of the most genial feelings. We would not dwell on these ungrateful and delicate topics, though we do not feel justified in passing them over in entire silence.

The government of the Museum is vested in a Board of Trustees, 48 in number, of whom one is named directly by the Crown, 23 are official, 9 are named by the representatives or executors of parties who have been donors to the institution, and 15 are elected. The Royal Trustee is H. R. H. the Duke of Cambridge. Among the official trustees are the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Lord Chief Justice, the Presidents of some of the principal scientific and literary associations, and other high dignitaries of the nation. Among the elected trustees are Sir Robert Peel, Henry Hallam, and T. B. Macaulay.

“Such a Board of Trustees, to any one who considers the individuals who compose it, with reference to their rank, intelligence, and ability, would give assurance rather than promise of the most unexceptionable, and, indeed, wisest administration in every department. High attainments in literature and in science, great knowledge and experience of the world and its affairs, and practised habits of business, distinguish many of them in an eminent degree; and it would be unjust either to deny the interest which all of them feel in the prosperity of the institution, or refrain from acknowledging the devoted services which some of them have rendered in its administration. But, on the other hand, absorbing public cares, professional avocations, and the pursuits of private life, must, in many instances, prevent those individuals whose assistance might have been relied on from giving any thing like continued attention to the affairs of the Institution; and, what is perhaps of more importance, the large number of the Board, by dividing, or rather extinguishing, individual duty or responsibility, has, in a great measure, interfered with the superintendence and control which might have been usefully exercised by any smaller selected number specially charged with the duty.” — p. 3.

There appears to be no opportunity afforded, by means of

personal intercourse between the officers of the different departments and the Trustees, for consultation and advice relative to the management of the various and complicated affairs of the Museum. The Trustees, or such a number of them as find it convenient, meet once a month. No notice is given to them beforehand of the business to be brought before them, and all communications are by the means of written reports.

“We are compelled to add, that the mode in which the business is brought before the Trustees seems in itself as objectionable as the want of notice. It is done almost invariably by means of written reports. Not to mention the reports of the assistants and subordinate officers, the heads of departments communicate with the Board by written reports. These reports are transmitted to the Trustees by the principal librarian, who accompanies them with another report, in which he states such observations as occur to him. Neither the principal librarian nor the heads of departments are, except in extraordinary cases, admitted to the board-room when the business of their department is under consideration. The reports themselves, from the great increase of the establishment, have become so voluminous, that they cannot be read entirely at the meeting of Trustees.” — p. 6.

The Commissioners further say, —

“We find, however, there is scarcely one of the highest officers of the institution who has not complained of systematic exclusion from the Board when the affairs of his department are under consideration, as equally disparaging to himself and injurious to the interests of the department, giving no opportunity of explaining their reports, or meeting the objections and criticisms to which they may have been subject; and their own absence, joined to that of the principal librarian, leaves them under the painful but natural impression, where their suggestions are disallowed, that the interests with which they are charged have not been fully represented. We cannot but ascribe to this cause the unfortunate and unseemly jealousies which the evidence shows to have long existed among the principal officers of the Museum — their distrust in the security of the means by which they communicate with the Board — their misgivings as to the fulness and fairness of the consideration which their suggestions receive — and their feelings of injustice done to their own department, arising, it may be, from an over zeal for its interests, or over estimate of its importance.” — p. 7.

Whilst looking over the Report and minutes of evidence,

we have had frequently forced upon our attention the unpleasant fact of "the want of harmony and good understanding between the heads of different departments." We are sorry to see that these internal dissensions are so great, and have been of so long standing. It is well known that much dissatisfaction was manifested in certain quarters when Mr. Panizza was, several years since, appointed Librarian, or Keeper of the Printed Books. The chief reasons given for dissatisfaction at his appointment, and for his commission bearing an earlier date than that of Sir Frederic Madden, were : First, that Mr. Panizza was a foreigner, and secondly, that he had not been so long a time in the Museum ; either of which facts it was considered ought to prevent his having precedence over Sir Frederic Madden. We have no desire or occasion to pass judgment on the propriety or justice of the original appointment, but we feel bound to say, in view of all the facts which have been elicited by the investigations of the Commissioners, that it would be a difficult matter to find in any country another man so preëminently fitted to take charge of such a department, as Antonio Panizza. Through his agency, in a great degree, the recent large and valuable additions to its numbers have been made, and a system of management been devised and adopted, which gives this collection the character of the **MODEL LIBRARY** for the world. And here we cannot do better than to borrow the remarks of Professor Jewett, alluded to in the Report of the Commissioners, and published in full with the minutes of evidence. Few persons are so well entitled to express an opinion on such a subject. Writing to a friend in London, who had desired to know his views, he says, —

"I have heard with regret, not unmingled with *indignation*, of the complaints which have been made against Mr. Panizza's management of the Library of the British Museum. You ask my opinion *in extenso* on the subject. This I am most ready to give. You know that, after having been employed for several years as a Librarian, and having thus become familiar with all the details of a Librarian's duties, I spent two years on the continent of Europe, visiting the principal libraries, for the purpose of collecting such information as would enable us in America to establish our libraries on the best possible foundation. With this preparation I went to England. You know how much time I spent at the British

Museum, and how kindly and courteously we were both received by all the gentlemen connected with the establishment. The opinion which I then formed, and which I believe I expressed to Mr. Panizza, I still hold — that any person who wishes to become thoroughly acquainted with the whole subject of *Bibliothekswissenschaft* (to use a German term for which we have no English equivalent,) with the science of libraries, — need go no farther than the British Museum. In my opinion, it is by far the best regulated library in the world. The books are more faithfully guarded, and the public are more promptly served, than in any other library with which I am acquainted. No doubt the whole affair would have been in much better shape had Mr. Panizza had the management of it from the outset." — p. 265.

We shall not attempt to grapple with that complicated and vexatious subject which has occasioned so much controversy in England, and to which the commissioners were obliged to devote so much attention, — the Museum Catalogue. A separate and entire article would hardly be sufficient to consider the matter in its various aspects and bearings, and to present the different theories which have been started, and the numerous objections which have been brought against them all. We entertain some pretty decided opinions on the general subject of library catalogues, which we may possibly offer to our readers at a future time.

At this time, however, it may not be amiss to mention, that the plan proposed by Mr. Cooley to the commissioners of the Museum, and received with so much favor by them, namely, to stereotype the titles of the books separately, originated, several years since, with an eminent bibliographer in this country, Professor Jewett, then of Brown University, and now one of the officers of the Smithsonian Institution. Professor Jewett has devoted much time and thought to maturing and perfecting his plan. He has mentioned it freely to those persons who are most interested in such matters in this country, and has communicated his views to some of his friends in Europe. The plan has been received with approbation by the managers of some of our larger libraries, and arrangements have been made for carrying it into speedy effect. We are glad that it finds favor also in England; though we notice that Mr. Cooley embarrasses it with impracticable adjuncts, which will be likely to defeat his object. An important improvement of the plan was suggested, and specimens were shown,

at a recent meeting of the American Antiquarian Society, by the Rev. E. E. Hale, of Worcester; namely, substituting electrotypes for common stereotype plates. We presume that the public will soon be in possession of the details of Professor Jewett's plan, which has been known to individuals for several years. We hope that when this is the case, the author will not be accused of borrowing it without credit from an English source.

It is a lamentable fact that the matchless collection of books contained in the British Museum has no catalogue. The means of using the rich literary treasures, which have been obtained and preserved with so much care and cost, have not yet been provided. No one can tell the exact character of the contents of the library, and, of course, it does not at present answer the highest purpose for which it was designed. A great library without a catalogue has been well described by Carlyle, as a chaos and not a cosmos. Some thirty or forty years ago, a catalogue in eight octavo volumes was printed, giving the titles of books then in the library. It was an unpretending though very useful publication, not free from errors, but sufficiently accurate for the common purposes of consultation. Since that time, the contents of the Museum library have been quadrupled in number, and incalculably increased in value. Yet the only portion of a general catalogue which has been printed, since the one named above, is a single folio volume embracing only the titles which fall under the letter A; and the further publication of the work has been indefinitely postponed. The reading-room of the institution, it is true, contains something intended to answer the purposes of a catalogue, to be used only on the spot. It is partly in manuscript and partly in print, and fills, in its present very incomplete state, 70 or 80 folio volumes. The want of a printed catalogue has been the cause of much controversy and complaint.

This is a subject presenting more numerous and much greater difficulties than persons, who have not made it a matter of careful study, are aware of. Even the bibliographical giant at the Museum, who has for a long time past had the matter in special charge, has not been able satisfactorily to master it. Many years of thoughtful attention and laborious industry have been insufficient to produce the desired catalogue.

There has been much vexatious interference concerning the manner of making out the manuscript, from persons claiming superior wisdom and authority. This has only tended to interrupt and delay the completion of the work. The multitude of literary men in England have become impatient and clamorous for its appearance in print, though they have no proper appreciation of the obstacles in the way of its speedy publication.

There are two parties on the catalogue question. Mr. Panizza and his friends maintain, that the great and important thing to which all their efforts should tend, is the preparation of a manuscript catalogue with the title entered in full, and with numerous cross references. This would undoubtedly be of great service to all who could consult it at the Museum. It would certainly be a great bibliographical curiosity; filling a very large number of volumes (500 in folio, it is estimated,) and needing the work of many years. This manuscript catalogue, intended to be superior in its plan and execution to any ever before produced, has been said, apparently with much truth, to be Mr. Panizza's favorite hobby. His views are ably advocated by Professor De Morgan, John Wilson Croker, Mr. Hallam, and other distinguished literary gentlemen. It is maintained by them, that, as the library is not a lending one, but the books must be consulted at the Museum, this description of catalogue will be better than a briefer printed one. The objections to the printing of the catalogue of such a constantly increasing library arise from the fact, that it must necessarily be incomplete, although it would extend in print to at least forty folio volumes, and cost fifty thousand pounds. To abridge the titles would, it is said, be likely to occasion and perpetuate numerous errors. In answer to the question, —

“Do you think it would have been possible by any other plan than that which is now in progress, to have consulted the impatience of the public for a complete catalogue; could you have sacrificed, in some degree, uniformity and fulness without material disadvantage?”

Mr. Panizza says,—

“No, it could not have been done. The complaints against the present catalogue [i. e. the printed one in eight volumes] are, in fact, that the titles are not full and accurate, and if those who



compiled them, Sir Henry Ellis and my predecessor, had not been hurried, I have no doubt that they would have made a much better catalogue. They made as good a catalogue as they could make, under the pressure of the trustees wishing for a "compendious" catalogue immediately. If we now publish another catalogue in a hurry, we never shall have a good one. We shall publish one in a hurry, and then again, when that is completed, we must publish another still in a hurry. What we really want now is a catalogue on a lasting basis carefully compiled, serving as a pattern for titles to be added ever after — a catalogue that shall be creditable to such an institution as this, and such as the public have a right to expect, and not any more make-shifts as we have had hitherto. If we are to have short titles, we not only have to do what has been done hitherto, but we have actually to spoil the good titles which we have."— p. 235.

The other party, at the head of which we should place Sir Robert Inglis, a trustee of the Museum who has devoted much time and thought to the subject, insists on the practicability and expediency of printing without delay a correct compendious catalogue, giving in brief the title of every work in the collection. Lord Mahon, Bolton Corney, and Thomas Carlyle are among the numerous and able supporters of this view. The Rev. Josiah Forshall, who has been for many years Secretary to the Trustees of the Museum, says, —

"I take the liberty of stating my own unvarying, but more and more confirmed, and now perfectly established conviction, that if the public are to have a proper use of the Museum Library, *there must be a printed catalogue* of its contents; and I speak confidently, not merely because my convictions are thus complete, but because, in the course of my experience, I have met with very few persons indeed, of an average amount of common sense, and well acquainted with the subject, who were not substantially of the same mind; and I am pretty sure that if the Commissioners were to examine not merely the officers of this House, but the chief librarians of all the public libraries in this country, such as those of the Universities, of Sion College, the London Institution, and Red Cross Street, they would find a very general concurrence of opinion upon that point; and it is my firm belief that there is no money that could be expended by government so profitably with a view to the improvement of the people, as that which may be necessary for the publication of a good printed catalogue of the library of the Museum — I say a good catalogue. Any printed catalogue is far better than none. A catalogue with one tenth part of the merit of the old octavo catalogue is vastly better than

none. But the catalogue printed by the Trustees of the British Museum, the national catalogue of this national library, ought to be a good catalogue, one of the best of its kind ; and I venture, from an experience of 27 or 28 years, to assert that there is no real difficulty in producing it."—p. 356.

The commissioners in their report declare themselves unequivocally and strongly against printing, for the present at least, any catalogue. Their decision is not likely to be quietly acquiesced in by the literary men of Great Britain. It has created much dissatisfaction. Already there have been some fierce attacks upon the report. We shall not enter into the controversy ; but, having stated the principal points at issue, leave it to be settled by the parties most nearly concerned, though the result will be regarded with deep interest by the whole literary world.

The other matters which claimed the attention of the commissioners were of minor importance and of less general interest ; and as they have no direct bearing upon the particular subject which we have been considering, we pass them over without further remark. We cannot, however, close our notice of the Report without expressing our high gratification that, notwithstanding the difficulties and complaints to which we have alluded, this noble national institution is in a highly prosperous condition, and our hope, that it will not be long before the United States will successfully emulate the example of Great Britain.

The two pamphlets, whose titles are placed last on our list, may be regarded as auspicious signs full of good promise. Our limits at present will hardly allow us to give even a brief outline of the prospects and plans of the institutions to which they relate.

The Astor Library owes its existence to the munificence of John Jacob Astor, who died on the 29th day of March, 1848, leaving by his will the sum of \$400,000 for the establishment of a public library in the city of New York. He named twelve trustees. The Mayor of the city and the Chancellor of the State for the time being, in respect to their offices, were to be of the Board, with Washington Irving, Joseph G. Cogswell, Fitz-Greene Halleck, and seven others. Washington Irving was appointed President of the Trustees, and Mr. Cogswell,

well Superintendent of the Library, both by the unanimous vote of the Board.

“ On the 28th of October, 1848, Mr. Cogswell, the superintendent, was authorized to go to Europe and purchase, at his discretion, books for the library to the value of twenty thousand dollars, his expenses to be defrayed by the institution, and the books paid for out of the first moneys to be received from the executors of Mr. Astor's will. The object of the trustees in sending Mr. Cogswell abroad at that particular time was to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by the distracted political condition of Europe and the reduction of prices consequent upon it, to purchase books at very low rates ; and they deem it proper to say in this place, in order to avoid the necessity of recurring to the subject, that the trust confided to him has been executed to their perfect satisfaction, that the purchases were made at prices greatly below the ordinary standard, and they consider it due to him to add, that his selections fully confirm the high estimate they had placed on his peculiar fitness for the services he has performed, and is performing, in the establishment of the library.” — p. 5.

One of the conditions of the bequest has caused the trustees much embarrassment. The will contains the following emphatic clause, namely, “ I direct that the sum to be appropriated for erecting the library building shall not exceed seventy-five thousand dollars.” It has been found very difficult to obtain a satisfactory plan for an edifice which could be built for this sum, and which would combine the various requisites of size, solidity, and security against fire. The wisdom of Mr. Astor, in imposing this restriction, has been doubted by some persons, though the trustees make no complaint concerning the matter. A glance at Girard College, Gore Hall, and the Boston Athenæum ought to convince any one, that the temptation to indulge a taste for architectural display, even at the expense and by the sacrifice, in a great degree, of the real wants and legitimate objects of such institutions, is sufficient to overcome the judgment of men having a high reputation for wisdom and for the exercise of judicious economy. The trustees of the Astor Library have succeeded in forming a contract for a suitable building at the above named cost. It will be 65 feet front and 120 feet deep, and is to be completed by the first of April, 1852.

The library will not be considered as formed until \$120,000, being the whole amount which is authorized by Mr. Astor's

will to be applied to the purchase of books in the outset of the institution, has been expended. The smallest number of books, which the trustees consider it safe to estimate as a basis for enlargement, is one hundred thousand volumes. The number of books now collected amounts to over 20,000 volumes. These are arranged on temporary shelves in a house hired for the purpose; and any persons desiring to view or use the books are permitted to do so. No little surprise has been expressed by visitors acquainted with the value of such works, on learning that the entire cost, thus far, has been only about \$27,000. We doubt whether so large and valuable a collection of books has ever before been purchased on so favorable terms.

Particular attention appears to have been paid to the selection of the best books on bibliography. It appears, in the report of the trustees, that the valuable bibliographical works, amounting already to about one thousand volumes, were presented to the institution by the librarian. "Mr. Cogswell has thus become, in effect, the founder of a department of great importance in connection with the library, to be completed by a large additional contribution from his own means." We have before us an unpretending pamphlet of thirty pages, being a printed list of these works, which the compiler says is designed merely to answer the simple question, "Does such a work belong to the library?" It is, however, of itself, a valuable contribution to bibliography, and though printed anonymously, is evidently the work of the learned librarian. If published, it would be of great use to many persons who cannot avail themselves directly of the advantages of the library.

The Astor Library will, probably, when first formed, contain a larger number and a better selection of books than any other in the United States. With the generous provision which the founder has made for its increase, together with the liberal donations which will undoubtedly come to this as the largest library in the country, it is likely to grow rapidly, till it shall take rank with the large libraries of the Old World. Under the direction of an enlightened and judicious Board of Trustees, with Mr. Irving for President, and Mr. Cogswell for Superintendent of the library, there is every reason to believe, that the desire so warmly expressed at the conclusion

of the report will be fulfilled: — “That the Astor Library may soon become, as a depository of the treasures of literature and science, what the city possessing it is rapidly becoming in commerce and wealth.”

From local situation and other causes which will readily suggest themselves to the reader, the chief interest and benefits of the Astor Library will be felt by the particular State and city where it is established. We hope that private munificence or public patronage will originate and support elsewhere many other similar libraries. Still something more will be necessary. We must have a large national library, to which we can point men of other countries as the substantial evidence of interest in the promotion of literature and science; and to which we can direct such of our own scholars as are desirous of availing themselves of the highest and fullest authorities in their investigations and studies. The time has come when this subject demands, and is likely to receive, speedy and efficient attention.

The foundation of the Smithsonian Institution affords one of the most favorable opportunities that was ever offered in any country for the establishment of such a library. We are sure that a much wider and deeper interest on this subject pervades the community, than has been publicly expressed. We know that many are with confident expectation awaiting the proceedings of the Regents and Officers of that institution. They to whom the management of its affairs is entrusted appear to be working together vigorously for this, in connection with the other great objects of the institution. It is a design worthy of their best wishes and best efforts, and they will be sustained in it by the coöperation and sympathy of men of letters and men of science throughout the country. May we not reasonably hope, that our national senators and representatives will regard the matter with special favor? Let Congress emulate the noble example of the British Parliament, by a liberal grant, and we shall soon have an institution that, in extent and usefulness, will rival the British Museum, and be an honor to the country.